

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Medical Practices

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected human life in all spheres. However, the medical and health practices seen changed a lot since the arrival of this pandemic. This article describes the positive and negative impact of covid in the medical field. The integration of telehealth needs to be emphasized and positive changes like hand hygiene, wearing a mask, and appropriate social distancing and online interactive learning may be useful in health care practices. Although, the negative effects of the pandemic like ignoring the patients with other comorbidity and deteriorating mental health of HCW must be kept in mind and should be properly addressed.

Keywords: COVID-19- Pandemic- Telehealth- Hygiene- Mental health- Medical Education

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Introduction

Several viral epidemics have hit the world in the last few decades, like severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003, influenza caused by the virus subtype H1N1 in 2009, the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) in 2012, and Ebola virus disease in 2014 [1-3]. But no one reaches the global spread as the novel Coronavirus2019 (COVID-19) has reached and thus declared as a pandemic by WHO [4]. The Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is extremely contagious and spread from person to person through close contact by droplets and fomites very easily and incredibly quickly. It has a great impact on human life in all domains. Due to its high contagious nature, it has stretched the healthcare infrastructure worldwide including most developed countries. It has significantly transformed the practice of medical sciences in various ways. Because of the impact of COVID-19 on medical practices, many professional societies and government bodies had issued guidelines and advisories for ensuring the safety of patients and health care workers. It is desirable for all medical practitioners to understand the direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 on day-to-day activities and to adopt safe practices and measures. These medical practices probably have become 'new normal'

for a future time to come and need to be included in even routine work to provide optimal care with safety to all.

Tele-health in health care services

Telehealth has turned out as a new tool for providing safe medical care to needy patients. It avoids the risk of getting exposure to viral infection by maintaining social distance and avoiding patient movement. This telehealth includes telemedicine through audio calls, videoconferencing, e-recording, e-communication, or even remote patient monitoring. These services shall be an excellent tool for providing health-related care to patients. It can be flexible and provide a tool for triage as well as various medical care like the need for an emergency visit, physical visit or just to continue to follow up on telemedicine. Indian MOHFW in partnership with NITI Aayog prepared guidelines for telemedicine practice enabling registered medical practitioners to provide health care services in remote settings using telemedicine. Every country might take forward step to promote telehealth.

Hygiene awareness

Since the start of the pandemic exhaustive campaigns have been started to promote social distancing proper

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and repetitive hand washing and the use of face masks to stop the transmission of the virus. These healthy practices created a lot of awareness among the general public and healthcare provider, which is very useful preventive measures in the future to curtail the spread of other bacterial and viral infection. As a result of this, the overall health of people will improve in the post- COVID-19 era.

Strengthening of the health care system

SARS-COV-2 pandemic has shaken the health care systems worldwide, as it has highlighted the various lacunas in the health care systems. The Drastic increase in the specific demand of healthcare workers and healthcare facilities made the health system of most countries unable to work effectively. This pandemic has realized the world that a strong healthcare system is the best defense against any outbreak. In the future, all the nations shall work in direction of strengthening the structure of the health system by various means like mutual understanding, sharing knowledge and expertise across the countries.

Gaps in care of patients with other ailments

Since COVID-19 has created so much panic that the entire focus of the government and health care system is on dealing with COVID -19 including its prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. As a result, the medical care for patients with other chronic diseases like cancer, diabetes, hypertension is getting ignored. Also, the facilities to manage patients with acute emergencies may be limited due to facilities being converted to COVID centers and concerns related to transport. This eventually raises the chance of complications and worsening of disease in long term. This may lead to affect their quality of life as well. So, the proper care and essential services to these patients need to be ensured by integrating various innovative technology like telehealth, etc.

The mental health of healthcare workers

COVID -19 pandemic causes variable psychological stress among the general population which leads to the development of new psychiatric symptoms and worsening of preexisting. Healthcare workers are even more prone to such mental stress due to various factors, like fear of becoming infected and exposing their family members, lack of definitive treatment protocol, exhaustive duties, and extensive media coverage. All these make them more vulnerable to psychiatric illnesses like depression, panic attacks, and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, to delirium, psychosis, and suicide. A multidisciplinary approach should be adopted by every nation to keep their HCW mentally healthy and sound.

Medical education

Like any other field, medical education did not escape from the impact of COVID-19. It plays the role of stimulant to remodel the medical education system from the traditional approach to a virtual model to maintain social distancing and prevent the spread of disease. Major changes in this sector include the cancellation of classes (in-person), continuous medical education

(CME), conferences, and hands-on training to reduce the transmission. To overcome this, the trend of online classes and online interactive learning of the medical fraternity through webinars and teleconferences become very popular, have changed the way of medical education. Its long-term impact on medical education is not known but short-term changes have surprised everyone and given new ways of learning [5].

In conclusion, to conclude, the COVID-19 pandemic will have a great impact on medical practice soon. The integration of telehealth needs to be emphasized and positive changes like hand hygiene, wearing a mask, and appropriate social distancing and online interactive learning may be useful in health care practices. On the flip side, the negative effects of the pandemic like ignoring the patients with other comorbidity and deteriorating mental health of HCW must be kept in mind and should be properly addressed.

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